

A rectangular banner featuring a close-up photograph of vibrant green cassava leaves with visible veins and water droplets. The text "FOCUS ON CASSAVA" is overlaid in white, bold, uppercase letters.

**FOCUS ON CASSAVA**

**POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING  
OF  
VULNERABLE PERSONS**

## Policy for Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons

Although Focuswise SHG does not directly work with Vulnerable Persons, the projects and programs it engages in address the needs of vulnerable communities and groups. There is potential for instances of abuse to take place in the context of these projects and programs, which Focuswise SHG staff may become aware of through their project development and monitoring activities.

Through its statutory mission to address food insecurity, help communities alleviate hunger and poverty through improved cassava, Focuswise is well positioned to promote good practice to those of its partners who directly or indirectly work with Vulnerable Persons.

The aim of this policy is:

- To promote the safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons directly served by Focuswise's Partners; and
- To ensure that any abuse of Vulnerable Persons that occurs in the context of Focuswise's projects and programs is reported and addressed.

### 1. VULNERABLE PERSONS COVERED BY THE POLICY

- a. Focuswise believes that all children, human beings below the age of eighteen years, should be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence and adheres to the fundamental rights of the child as spelled out in the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989*.
- b. Focuswise further recognizes that vulnerable adults, persons over the age of eighteen years who are unable to take care of or protect themselves against harm or exploitation for whatever reason, require particular protection.
- c. Focuswise further recognizes that both children and vulnerable adults (hereinafter referred to as the "**Vulnerable Persons**") have rights as individuals and shall be treated with dignity and respect.

### 2. CONTEXT

- a. While the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* was almost universally ratified eighteen years ago, there is still much to be done in order to ensure the relevant protection of this vulnerable group. Regarding Vulnerable Persons in

general, Focuswise encourages a commitment and action of all stakeholders at national and international levels, to stop and prevent abuse.

b. Focuswise considers that **abuse** is any behavior towards a person that causes harm, endangers life or violates rights. Within this broad definition of abuse, the following subtypes of abuse are identified:

- (i) Physical abuse;
- (ii) Sexual abuse;
- (iii) Sexual exploitation;
- (iv) Commercial exploitation, including child labour;
- (v) Financial or material – stealing or denying access to money or possessions;
- (vi) Emotional abuse;
- (vii) Neglect and negligent treatment;
- (viii) Discrimination – abuse motivated by discriminatory attitudes towards age, race, religion, gender, disability or cultural background.

Focuswise will on the issue of Vulnerable Persons be guided by the clause that shall read as follows:

*“Focuswise believes that all vulnerable persons, meaning children below the age of eighteen years and vulnerable adults, require protection from all forms of abuse and exploitation.*

*Wishing to promote the highest standards in this regard, Focuswise encourages the Recipient [alternatively: the Consultant/ the Service Provider/ the Partner] to adhere to its Policy for Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons and to promote the values and standards laid down in this Policy in its work.”*

- (ii) Actively promote its Policy for Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons by making the Policy publicly available through the Focuswise website (<https://www.focusoncassava.com/>); and
- (iii) Provide relevant guidance to Focuswise Partners when requested, aimed at the safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons.

### **3. VULNERABLE PERSON'S PROTECTION**

- a. It is the policy of Focuswise that its entire staff, to be understood as its officers, directors, employees (“**Focuswise Staff**”), shall adhere to the following principles:
  - (i) All Vulnerable Persons have rights as individuals, without discrimination of any kind and irrespective of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status;
  - (ii) All Vulnerable Persons have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation;
  - (iii) All Vulnerable Persons shall be encouraged to fulfill their potential and inequalities shall be challenged;
  - (iv) The welfare of Vulnerable Persons should be safeguarded and promoted;
  - (v) Everybody has a responsibility to support the care and protection of Vulnerable Persons;
  - (vi) Non-profit or development organizations have a duty of care to Vulnerable Persons with whom they work and with whom their representatives work;
  - (vii) If a non-profit or development organization works through partners they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards

of protection for the Vulnerable Persons in their partners' programs;

- (viii) Recognition of the importance of working in partnership with Focuswise's partners in the protection of Vulnerable Persons.

- b. Focuswise's Staff shall strive to make Focuswise's activities safe and caring environment(s) for all people, and in particular Vulnerable Persons.

**A Caring Environment** is one:

- (i) In which the health, safety and welfare of Vulnerable Persons have been assessed and catered for;
- (ii) In which staff is aware of the possibility of abuse and take reasonable measures to prevent that possibility; and
- (iii) Where there is a sound and known reporting system for any incident.

- c. Focuswise encourages its Partners to pursue their work in the same spirit and create Caring Environment for Vulnerable Persons.

- d. Activities undertaken by Focuswise shall be planned, organized and delivered in accordance with the principles of Focuswise's Policy for Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons.

- e. Focuswise encourages Focuswise Partners who work directly with Vulnerable Persons to develop an appropriate code of conduct that identifies the types of prohibited conduct that would cause abuse to Vulnerable Persons and which provides guidance for their staff to avoid any acts of abuse against Vulnerable Persons. In pursuing this goal Focuswise recommends as a reference the resource material provided by Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), and in particular the "NGO Checklist for Developing or Revising Codes of Conduct" available at:

<http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/checklist-for-codes-of-conduct-27042010.pdf> .

#### **4. PROCEDURE**

- a. Focuswise encourages Focuswise Staff and to be alert to signs that may suggest a Vulnerable Person is in need of help. Focuswise also encourages the employees of Focuswise Partners to adopt the same approach.
  
- b. Focuswise shall treat any allegation or concern regarding the abuse of a Vulnerable Person seriously. The reporting procedure outlined below shall be followed strictly by Focuswise Staff. In following the reporting procedure particular care shall be taken with regard to an individual's right to privacy and confidentiality when information is shared with appropriate people in the course of following up an allegation.
  
- e. Focuswise staff working on project development or monitoring have to be alert to possibilities of the abuse and exploitation of Vulnerable Persons. If such abuse or exploitation is observed it is the duty of Focuswise Staff to inform the Safeguarding Officer. The staff member should not attempt to investigate the allegation or to discuss it further other than with the Safeguarding Officer who is responsible for further investigation and, if necessary, referral to the police and/or appropriate local authority in the jurisdiction where the reported incident has or may have taken place.
  
- f. Focuswise encourages Focuswise Partners to develop and implement a relevant protection and reporting procedure, in line with the size and complexity of their organization, based on relevant risk assessment and in observation of the international standards, as promoted, inter alia, by the Keeping Children Safe Coalition and Humanitarian Accountability Partnership.

#### **5. PREVENTION**

- a. There are various steps an organization can take to encourage a culture of safe workplace, and prevent or reduce the risk of harm to Vulnerable Persons – these are called preventative measures. These preventative measures aim at protecting Vulnerable Persons, the staff and the reputation of the organization in question. As Focuswise does not work directly with Vulnerable Persons, Focuswise may only encourage its Partners to adopt the highest possible standards in accordance with the scope of their operations and structure.
  
- b. Focuswise encourages all Focuswise Partners working directly with Vulnerable Persons and, in particular, with children, to introduce a system of checks when recruiting new staff that considers the following if appropriate:
  - (i) The same standards should be applied for paid, non-paid, short-term or permanent staff;

- (ii) Developing clear job descriptions, terms of reference/role briefs for all posts including where short-term contracts or consultants are being recruited;

- ( i v) The selection criteria shall outline the relevant experience needed if the post involves direct work with children and the commitment to keeping children safe is included in details of any post sent to prospective job candidates;
- (v) Application forms that ask for consent to gain information on a person's past convictions/pending disciplinary proceedings shall be developed and documentation to confirm identity and proof of relevant qualifications shall be requested;
- (vi) The interview process shall be well planned and the interviewers have the relevant experience and knowledge about child protection and best practice;
- (vii) Up to three references including some from previous employees or others who have knowledge of the candidate's experience and suitability to work with children shall be taken and the identity of referees shall be verified;
- (viii) As many background checks as possible shall be conducted;
- (ix) The use of probationary periods of employment to ensure suitability once in post shall be considered.

## CHILD PROTECTION SELF AUDIT

<b>Children And The Organisation</b>		<b>ABC</b>		
1	The organisation and its local partners are very clear about its responsibility to protect children and make this known to all who come into contact with them.			
2	The way staff and local partners behave towards children suggests that they are committed to protecting children from abuse.			
3	There is good awareness of the <i>UN Convention of the Rights of the Child</i> (UNCRC) or other children's rights instruments and this is seen as a basis for child protection in the organisation.			
4	Managers and senior staff ensure that children are listened to and consulted and that their rights are met.			
5	The organisation and its local partners make it clear that all children have equal rights to protection.			
6	The organisation and its local partners manage children's behaviour in ways which are non-violent and do not degrade or humiliate children.			

<b>Policies And Procedures That Help Keep Children Safe</b>		<b>ABC</b>		
1	The organisation and its local partners have a written child protection policy or some clear arrangements to make sure that children are kept safe from harm.			
2	relevant management body (eg, senior management board, executive, committee).			
3	The policy or arrangements have to be followed by everyone.			
4	There are clear child protection procedures in place that provide step-by-step guidance on what action to take if there are concerns about a child's safety or welfare.			
5	There is a named child protection person/s with clearly defined role and responsibilities.			

6	The child protection procedures also take account of local circumstances.			
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<b>Preventing Harm To Children</b>		<b>ABC</b>		
1	There are policies and procedures or agreed ways of recruiting staff and for assessing their suitability to work with children, including where possible police and reference checks.			
2	There are written guidelines for behaviour or some way of describing to staff and local partners what behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable especially when it comes to contact with children.			
3	The consequences of breaking the guidelines on behaviour are clear and linked to organisational disciplinary procedures.			
4	Guidance exists on appropriate use of information technology such as the internet, websites, digital cameras etc to ensure that children are not put at risk.			
5	including residential care, children are adequately supervised and protected at all times.			
6	There are well-publicised ways in which staff can raise concerns, confidentially if necessary, about unacceptable behaviour by other staff or representatives.			

<b>Implementation And Training</b>		<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
1	There is clear guidance to staff, local partners and other organisations (including funding organisations) on how children will be kept safe.			
2	Child protection must be applied in ways that are culturally sensitive but without condoning acts that are harmful to children.			
3	There is a written plan showing what steps will be taken to keep children safe.			
4	All members of staff and volunteers in the organisation and its local partners have training on child protection which includes an introduction to the organisations' child protection policy and procedures where these exist.			

5	All members of staff and local partners are provided with opportunities to learn about how to recognise and respond to concerns about child abuse.			
6	Work has been undertaken with all local partners to agree good practice expectations based on these standards.			

<b>Information And Communication</b>		<b>ABC</b>		
1	Children are made aware of their right to be safe from abuse.			
2	Everyone in the organisation and the local partners know which named staff member has special responsibilities for keeping children safe and how to contact them.			
3	Contact details are readily available for local child protection resources, safe places, national authorities and emergency medical help.			
4	Children are provided with information on where to go to for help and advice in relation to abuse, harassment and bullying.			
5	Contacts are established at a national and/or local level with the relevant child protection/welfare agencies as appropriate.			
6	Staff members with special responsibilities for keeping children safe have access to specialist advice, support and information.			

<b>Monitoring and Review</b>		<b>ABC</b>		
1	Arrangements are in place to monitor compliance with child protection measures put in place by the organisation.			
2	Steps are taken to regularly ask children and parents/carers their views on policies and practices aimed at keeping children safe the effectiveness of these.			
3	The organisation uses the experience of operating child protection to influence policy and practice development.			
4	All incidents, allegations of abuse and complaints are recorded and monitored.			

5	Policies and practices are reviewed at regular intervals, ideally at least every three years.			
6	Children and parents/carers are consulted as part of these reviews of safeguarding policies and practices.			

Audit tool adapted from Keeping the Children Safe:  
<http://keepingchildrensafe.org.uk/toolkit2>